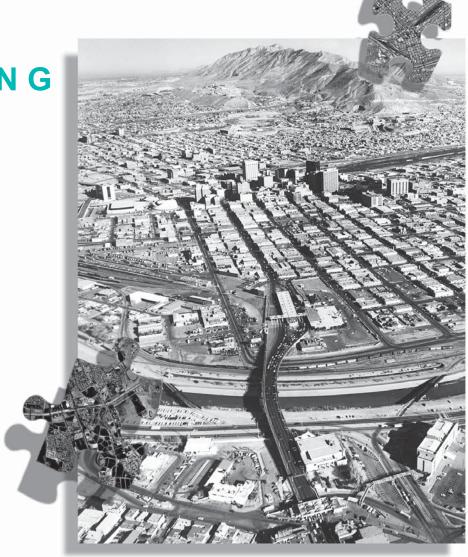
Introduction

DESIGNING

THE

FUTURE





As one of the fastest growing cities in the country and the largest metropolitan area along the border of the United States and Mexico, El Paso faces many challenges and opportunities. By offering residents, workers and visitors various options in how they live, work and play, *The Plan for El Paso (The Plan)* intends to shape the future of the City by focusing on its livability and quality of life. Important elements include enhancing: neighborhood attractiveness, character and sustainability, residents and workers' sense of safety, cooperation amongst various governmental entities for the sake of the region, and choices that offer people a range of activities, job opportunities, services and amenities. This comprehensive plan is dedicated to the people of El Paso who strive daily to make El Paso a better community for themselves and their neighbors.

Mission Statement

The comprehensive plan for the City of El Paso provides a planning framework to:

- achieve urban development to economically, socially, physically and environmentally benefit those who live, work and visit in the city;
- promote urban design as part of implementation strategies that will result in an enhanced quality of life and a sustainable community; and,
- develop partnerships that will attain regional cooperation.

As the adopted statement of policy for the development of the community, the comprehensive plan (*The Plan*) represents the official policy regarding the future character and quality of development through a composite of all land use elements. A comprehensive plan is a tool intended as a guide for development through a comprehensive approach to help foster a sustainable city for the future. Sustainable cities use resources efficiently and effectively by balancing the need for growth with the need for stability and prudent resource use. A sustainable culture thrives without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their economic and neighborhood needs.

Authority

The El Paso City Council authorized an update to the comprehensive plan on December 2, 1997 by resolution. Chapter 219 of the Texas Local Government Code grants statutory authority for the City to develop a comprehensive plan for its long range development and promotion of public health, safety, and welfare. The comprehensive plan consists of the planning documents and related materials by which the City establishes long-range general policies for guiding growth and development of the community in a coordinated and unified way.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING:

- To promote and protect public health, safety, morals and general welfare of the community;
- To facilitate safe, orderly, and healthful development;
- To ensure adequate public facilities to serve the needs of community; and,
- To prevent harm to persons or property.

Public action serves to prioritize important projects that enhance the overall sustainability, livability and quality of life of the community. Actions exercised through public controls—housing code, building codes and zoning ordinances—gradually and slowly reshape the use of land and the condition of buildings. Importantly, controls cannot create beautiful, attractive neighborhoods by themselves. Partnerships linking private initiative with public action—all of which must be working towards a set of common goals—are the only way to achieve *The Plan's* vision.

How to Use this Document

While the reach and activity of government investments is constrained by trends at the national, state and municipal levels, the community must make a careful assessment about where and when to spend public money for the benefit of the community. As the long range development guide for the City of El Paso, *The Plan* helps to direct this kind of public action. By identifying community priorities, *The Plan* sends a clear message to private interests, non-profit organizations and public agencies about the direction the community wishes to embark upon.

A POLICY GUIDE THAT:

- Is long-range and general, expressed in the form of maps and written materials;
- Expresses community goals and objectives;
- Designates areas for residential, commercial and industrial development;
- Indicates preferred locations for parks, schools, utility systems and other public facilities;
- Proposes means for transporting people and products;
- Recommends treatment for special areas, such as flood control, downtown renewal, and historic preservation; and,
- Lists actions needed to carry out the plan.

Plan Organization

The Plan has twelve chapters dealing with a specific element of interest to the long range development of the City. The Plan also contains a Map Atlas, which includes maps with releveance to the twelve preceding chapters. The plan format generally presents a "goal" followed by "policy" and "action" statements related to the goal, and may include a "narrative" about goals, policies, and actions. Each of these components is defined as follows:

A **goal statement** describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition. Goals represent the results that the City hopes to realize over time. Goals are broad in scope and, considered comprehensively, affect every aspect of the City. Whether expressed in terms of number or only as direction for future change, goals are not guarantees or mandates.

A **policy statement** describes a course of action or rule of conduct to be used to achieve the plan goals. A policy helps to guide the creation or change of specific rules or strategies such as development regulations, budgets or study area plans. Implementation of most policies involves a range of City actions over time, so that one specific action or project does not necessarily fulfill a particular plan policy. For example, a policy that the City will "give priority to" a particular need indicates that this need will be treated as important, not that it will take precedence in every decision.

An **action statement** describes a specific element that must be altered to attain the stated goals within a more specified period of time and starts to describe the ways in which a policy can be implemented. City officials will generally make decisions on specific actions by following ordinances, resolutions, budgets, or study area plans that reflect relevant plan policies.

Some policies and actions use the words "shall" or "should" and "ensure" or "encourage" and so forth. In general, such words should be read to describe the relative degree of emphasis that the policy or action statement imparts, but not necessarily to establish a specific legal duty to perform a particular act, to undertake a program or project, or to achieve a specific result.

Process

The El Paso Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), the City Planning Commission (CPC), the City Council and the Mayor oversaw the development of this document. The CPAC was created by the resolution authorizing the update of the comprehensive plan. The nineteen member volunteer body provided important and necessary guidance to staff during the course of the project. Staff called on the participation of citizens, business and development representatives, special interest groups, advisory commissions, government officials, department heads, and the staff of other city agencies throughout the process.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS HELPS TO:

- Minimize conflicts between developments;
- Eliminate duplication of services and facilities;
- Achieve more efficient use of local funds;
- Coordinate orderly development of public improvements;
- Address growth issues;
- Preserve unique characteristics or features of development; and,
- Establish the legal foundation for subdivision, zoning and other regulations.

Public Involvement Program

A public involvement program (PIP) was officially adopted as part of the resolution authorizing the update of the comprehensive plan. A public involvement program seeks to involve the general public in the planning process to ensure that community members have an opportunity to submit views and proposals at various stages. Meetings of the CPAC served as public forums where: materials were presented to the public; experts on various fields addressed the Committee; goal, policy and action statements were reviewed; and, members of the general public participated. The Department of Planning also hosted a series of five public meetings during the month of February 1999 at various locations throughout the City to solicit wide-spread input by Planning Area. In addition, special staff presentations on *The Plan* and its contents were made to various interested organizations upon request. Finally, the City Plan Commission and City Council held formal public hearings on the document prior to adoption.

Implementation

Implementation of *The Plan* will occur gradually over time and will require a wide range of efforts. Investment, regulation, leadership and support must come into play to build consensus and devote resources necessary to carry out the plan's vision. *The Plan* is a collection of ideas and recommendations about how to make decisions about future growth and development in El Paso. It is a document that looks to the future by proposing goals and policies to guide City actions. Telling the story of how these goals and policies relate to each other is one of *The Plan's* most important obligations to the community that shaped its content.